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Thursday, May 15, 2003

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20544

Dear Ms. Dortch:

I have served in the Minnesota Senate for more than 20 years and have seen many changes in the telecommunication industry and telecommunications policy. Without question, the most dramatic change since the break-up of AT&T has been the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the evolution of a competitive marketplace.

In Minnesota, we have a very competitive telecommunications marketplace. The goal of the 1996 Act to create competition within the industry has succeeded in Minnesota. Recent news reports have indicated that Qwest has lost nearly 45% of the business lines in Minnesota and 74% of all lines to competitors. There is little doubt that the market is irreversibly open to competition.

It is my understanding that Qwest has received FCC approval to provide long distance service in 12 of its 14 operating states and that the systems supporting its application are the same as those reviewed and approved by the FCC in its prior orders. I believe this further demonstrates that Qwest has succeeded in opening its local markets in Minnesota. Consumers in Minnesota deserve the same opportunities and choices that consumers in neighboring states like Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota enjoy.

I urge the FCC to approve Qwest's 271 application.

Sincerely,

Bill Belanger
State Senator



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